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Adoption of the report of the Committee on its forty-first session

Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003

(Item 4 (a))

Section 27, Management and central support services

1. At its 21st meeting, on 25 June 2001, the Committee considered section 27, Management and central support services, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (A/56/6 (sect. 27 A-G)).

2. The representatives of the General Assembly introduced the budget section and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the budget section.

Discussion

3. General support was expressed for the proposed programme of work of the Department of Management for the biennium 2002-2003. Views were expressed that the Department had made a substantial contribution towards the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 52/12 A and B of 12 November and 19 December 1997 respectively, both entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform", by introducing new approaches to the management of the Secretariat in the area of common support services.

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4. Views were expressed that the presentation of the budget fascicles in the results-based budgeting format was uneven in some parts of the section and required further improvement. Concern was expressed that some expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement included in the medium-term plan were not fully reflected in the programme narrative. Views were also expressed that some expected accomplishments were too broad and general and that the contents of some indicators of achievement required further refinement. A need was expressed for the development of common benchmarks and standards for comparable services to ensure a consistent approach across the section to the use of indicators. A view was also expressed that a zero-growth budgeting approach had imposed some limitations in the allocation of sufficient resources to the priority areas within common support services, and that other alternatives, such as the concept of zero-based budgeting, could be explored.

5. Measures proposed to address the priority issues within the Department of Management, such as in the area of administration of justice, were noted. At the same time, it was indicated that retaining the administration of justice activity in the Department might compromise the independence of the judicial process as it is described in General Assembly resolution 55/258 of 14 June 2001 on human resources management. Views were also expressed that the division of the administration of justice between different organizational units of the Department might slow down the process and weaken the implementation of judicial decisions.

6. With regard to section 27A, Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management, a view was expressed that the absence of workload indicators under that section would make it difficult to monitor the programme delivery, evaluate the results achieved and establish the mechanism of accountability of the sectoral and line managers.

7. With regard to section 27B, Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, views were expressed that the financial and budgetary planning, execution and reporting of the peacekeeping operations was a core function of the Secretariat which should be financed from the regular budget rather than from the peacekeeping support account.

8. With regard to section 27C, Office of Human Resources Management, views were expressed that the programme narrative of the section should be revised to reflect fully the provisions of General Assembly resolution 55/258 on human resources management. Emphasis was placed upon the priority implementation by the Office of Human Resources Management of the measures for strengthening the specific areas of human resources management set out in the resolution. Concern was expressed that the programme narrative did not sufficiently indicate the measures by the Office of Human Resources Management for establishing a clear linkage between increased responsibilities delegated to the programme managers and their accountability for decisions taken. A view was expressed that the monitoring of programme implementation would require the introduction of explicit and effective measurement tools, including feedback from staff, into the construction of indicators of achievement. A view was also expressed that the presentation of the programme tended to lean towards elaboration on the conceptual formulation of the reform rather than identification of a specific strategy. The importance of staff training for improved functioning of the Organization was emphasized. A view was expressed that management of the central training

programme should rely more on coordination and cooperation with other organizations of the United Nations system with a view to employing the best practices and experience of the system.

9. With regard to section 27D, Office of Central Support Services, emphasis was placed upon the need for short-term and medium-term strategies for information technology, including plans on video-conferencing and other services, in addition to the long-term strategy proposed by the Secretary-General. Measures by the Office of Central Support Services for the introduction of common services arrangements on a reimbursable basis were noted. Views were expressed that the Office of Central Support Services should take specific steps for expanding such arrangements to other common support services currently in operation. Completion of the development of the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) was noted. Views were expressed that the time had come to capitalize on technological advantages offered by the system with a view to streamlining administrative organizational structures.

Conclusions and recommendations

10. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly review the question of the ombudsman in section 27A, Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management, of the proposed programme budget for 2002-2003 regarding the location and the level of the post.

11. The Committee also recommended to the General Assembly that it request the Secretary-General to reformulate the programme narrative of section 27C, Office of Human Resources Management, of the proposed programme budget for 2002-2003 in accordance with Assembly resolution 55/258 of 14 June 2001 and submit it for consideration by the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session.

12. The Committee further recommended that the activities related to section 27, Management and central support services, should be presented in terms of objectives, expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement, where possible.

13. The Committee recommended to the General Assembly to approve the programme narrative of sections 27, 27A, 27B, 27D, 27E, 27F and 27G, Management and central support services, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003.